

Winter Newsletter

Mercy Health Foundation



June 2023

Message from the Chairman

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to you all, and hope you enjoy reading, our Winter newsletter. As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, we find ourselves embracing the transformative beauty of the changing seasons from Autumn to Winter. It is a time of reflection, gratitude, and renewal.

First, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of our donors. Your unwavering support has played a crucial role in our ability to provide exceptional care to those in need. It is through your generosity that we continue to make a positive impact on the lives of countless individuals and families within our community.

In this issue of our newsletter, we have compiled a series of articles that showcase the remarkable endeavours and breakthroughs made possible

by your contributions. We are honoured to share the stories of those who have chosen to leave a lasting legacy, like Lina, the devoted mother of triplets, who has decided to leave a gift in her Will to Mercy Health Foundation.

We are excited to highlight the groundbreaking research conducted by Mercy Perinatal, which promises to revolutionise the prevention of stillbirth. Through the dedication of this talented team, we are determined to improve the health outcomes for mothers and babies, ensuring that more mothers and babies leave our care and go safely home.

Finally, we invite you to explore how our local community has rallied together in support of Mercy Health. Our community has continued to show an unparalleled level of compassion and solidarity. Their collective efforts exemplify

the power of coming together for a common cause, and we are immensely grateful for their ongoing support.

Once again, thank you for your commitment to Mercy Health and for being an integral part of our mission to provide compassionate care to those who need it most. I'm constantly reminded how blessed and privileged we are when we are spared the challenges of some. We hope this Winter newsletter serves as a reminder of the incredible impact we can make when we stand united.

Kind regards

Mr Julien O'Connell AO
Chairman
Mercy Health Foundation



L-R: Nicholas, Grace, Kon, Lina and Jack at the triplets 21st birthday

Three times as **blessed**

When Lina and her husband Kon were told they were having triplets, they were thrilled and nervous.

“Not only were we becoming parents for the first time but we were at the extreme end of the scale – three babies and a high-risk pregnancy. Being somewhat naïve about what was in-store was a good thing,” Lina says.

At 12 weeks, Lina’s pregnancy took a turn for the worse and she was admitted to Mercy Hospital for

Women (MHW) to save her triplets. She required complete bed rest for the remainder of her pregnancy.

On 3 June 2001, at 28 weeks, Lina’s triplets, Grace, Nicholas and Jack, prematurely entered the world. Each precious baby weighed around a kilo and was too fragile to survive without medical attention. They were quickly transferred to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), where they spent 12 weeks receiving lifesaving, around-the-clock care.

“There was a nurse called Lyndall, she kept assuring me that our babies were progressing well. I would have struggled without her support and I will never forget her,” Lina says.

For Lina and Kon, it was a worrying and frightening time. Not knowing if their babies would hit milestones and if they would face lifelong challenges.

Thanks to the amazing staff at MHW, Grace, Nicholas and Jack



successfully graduated through every stage of their NICU journey and were able to be discharged at what would have been 40 weeks gestation – their due date.

“The NICU staff are very special and highly skilled people. We can’t thank them enough, even after all these years, for giving us the joy of being able to bring all three of our babies home,” Lina says.

Today, over two decades later, Grace, Nicholas and Jack are healthy, happy and thriving young adults in their final years of university.

Last year, the triplets celebrated another important milestone - their 21st birthdays. To their loving parents, they are three miracles who overcame the most incredible odds.

“In our Will, we wanted to acknowledge the contribution the NICU made to our family. At every milestone and with every achievement our children experience in life, I think of the role Mercy Hospital for Women has had in our joy, and am forever grateful,” Lina says.

Mercy Health Foundation has been blessed by many donors, like Lina, who have paid tribute to the care Mercy Health provided – supporting us to ‘care first’.

Your gift, no matter the size, will make a difference and allow Mercy Health to do even more to care for those in need.

If you are considering including a gift in your Will to Mercy Health Foundation, it would be our pleasure to confidentially discuss this with you. Please contact us at the details below:

Mercy Health Foundation
03 8416 7766
foundation@mercy.com.au
mercyhealthfoundation.org.au



Lina and Kon with their newborn triplets at Mercy Hospital for Women



Stephanie with her son Will in 2017

Heartbreak leads to groundbreaking research discovery

Stephanie has spent her career in corporate and community affairs, and the last 15 of those in banking, working to bring people to the front of the issues that most deeply impact them.

It wasn't until 2016, when Stephanie tragically lost her middle child Ethan to stillbirth, that her journey to help others who had experienced this trauma and heartbreak began.

Together with her husband James, Stephanie has three children, Samantha who is ten years old,

Ethan who would be six years old, and Will who is five years old.

When Stephanie was 40-weeks pregnant with her son Ethan she went into hospital preparing to deliver her precious baby into the world.

"Everything had been absolutely fine up until that point, and they were going to induce me if I didn't go into labour myself," Stephanie says, "then they went to monitor Ethan and there was no heartbeat. We just couldn't believe it."

"There were no signs that anything was wrong or about to happen, so it was just completely unexpected".

Stillbirth is devastatingly common, impacting six Australian families every day. Globally, 3 million pregnancies end in stillbirth every year.

Unfortunately, Stephanie and her family know first-hand the immense grief that is caused by stillbirth.

"When we found out Ethan had died, we went home to let it, kind of sink in a bit more. Then we



Stephanie and daughter Samantha's shadow, while pregnant with Ethan in 2016

went back to the hospital, and I delivered him there. He was perfect, so beautiful, just missing a heartbeat and we don't know why. It was such a shock, and it was so hard to deal with and recover from," Stephanie says.

"Our daughter Samantha was a bright and bubbly three-year-old at the time. She felt his loss and experienced her own sadness, and she also continued her normal fun, active life which helped us enormously. We are so grateful for our wonderful daughter."

In the weeks after Ethan's death, Stephanie reached out to Red Nose Australia for support, an organisation which she now volunteers her time and skills to.

"I just felt like I didn't know what to do and who to talk to. This whole new world had opened up that we had found ourselves in, and we had to do things that we didn't know how to do," Stephanie says.

"Making decisions about funerals and all sorts of things when you had been expecting to be going home with a newborn baby to

look after. It was overwhelming and so hard to navigate your way through. To have that support with people who had been there and understood made it easier."

In Stephanie's role as a volunteer at Red Nose Australia, she speaks with GPs and other health professionals who provide care for pregnant women and families, to help increase their awareness of safe sleep, safer pregnancy and the stillbirth bereavement care that Red Nose offers.

"Sometimes it's as simple as a phone call, but it is a network of incredible parents doing the work and raising awareness. There's a challenge in that because we are sharing our own stories of stillbirth and at times it can be very difficult to talk about," Stephanie says.

Stephanie first met Professor Stephen Tong, Co-director of Mercy Perinatal and clinician scientist and specialist obstetrician when she was pregnant with her youngest son, Will.

At her 32-week scan, Stephanie's sonographer detected a change and that something wasn't right. It was at this point that she was admitted as an in-patient at Mercy Hospital for Women in Heidelberg.

After two-weeks in hospital, the team led by Professor Sue Walker AO, Co-director of Mercy Perinatal, noticed that things were declining quickly.

"They detected another change. Things were declining a bit and that's when Sue came and did an ultrasound, and the team decided, we're going to get him out, and that's how Will came into the world," Stephanie says.

"Going on to have Will, after what happened with Ethan, the pregnancy was very stressful, but we had a great team looking after us with Stephen and Sue. We are so grateful and can't express that enough."

Unfortunately, ultrasound identifies less than 50% of all babies at risk of stillbirth.

That's why the team at Mercy Perinatal, led by Professor Tong and Professor Walker, are currently developing a stillbirth prevention test; a blood test that could be offered to all women that identifies vulnerable pregnancies with a heightened risk of stillbirth.

These at-risk babies could then be safely delivered, taken out of harm's way, before stillbirth occurs.

This world-first test will make the impossible, possible, and revolutionise pregnancy care around the world — saving millions of families from the heartbreak and tragedy of stillbirth.

"The research needs to keep being done, and the fact that Mercy Perinatal is doing this right now is so important and will help so many families. So no one has to experience the devastating loss of unexpected stillbirth," Stephanie says.

To support Mercy Perinatal's groundbreaking stillbirth prevention tests, please scan the QR code today. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.



Scan to support Mercy Perinatal's stillbirth prevention tests



Bank First delivering packs to nurses at Mercy Hospital for Women

International Nurses Day 2023

International Nurses Day is celebrated every year on 12 May, on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing; and the world comes together to celebrate the nursing profession.

This year on International Nurses Day, Bank First, a partner of Mercy Health Foundation helped us celebrate the amazing work and compassion of nurses by delivering 1,000 'Pinchapoo' pamper packs to both Werribee Mercy Hospital and Mercy Hospital for Women to show their gratitude.

At Mercy Health, we are blessed to

have thousands of nurses working with us across the full spectrum of care from hospitals, operating theatres, outpatient clinics, palliative care and mental health services, through to exceptional care in more than 30 aged care homes and home care.

"What I love most about being a nurse is the people. It's like this beautiful dance where everyone — the nurses, medical team, allied health staff and admin — comes together to achieve amazing outcomes for our patients," Kirsty Nason, Acting Nurse Unit Manager, Neonatal Services at Mercy Hospital for Women, says.

We are grateful for Bank First's ongoing support and commitment to Mercy Health, and all those who choose to work with us. This donation reflects the admiration many people in the community have for the highly skilled workforce of nurses everywhere.

To learn more about supporting Mercy Health, including our corporate partnership offering, please contact the team at the details below:

Mercy Health Foundation
03 8416 7766
foundation@mercy.com.au
mercyhealthfoundation.org.au

Delilah's Legacy

On Sunday 21 May, Rhiannon and Alex Hirschauer got together with family and friends to play nine holes of golf at Strathallan Golf Club in Bundoora. But, this wasn't just a game of golf, this was the annual 'Delilah Cup'.

Rhiannon was 17 weeks pregnant when she and Alex lost their baby Delilah in 2021. They were devastated by the loss, and although the experience was traumatic, they also said it was beautiful because of how the midwives at Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW) cared for them.

Every year they host the 'Delilah Cup' — a golf day to raise money for the birth suites at MHW. Around

30 keen golfers came out and played nine holes for a good cause and to remember Delilah.

"It was a great day and we raised over \$3,000. It was even more special because Sharon and Michelle came along too, two of the midwives who cared for us when we lost Delilah," Alex said.

If you would like to host a community fundraising event to support Mercy Health, please contact the team at the details below:

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(L-R) Rhiannon, Alex, Michelle and Sharon

Mother's Day High Tea benefits sick, small and premature babies



On the Friday before Mother's Day this year, Mercy Health Foundation hosted its inaugural Mother's Day High Tea Luncheon in the beautiful surrounds of the Rippon Lea Estate.

The stunning Rippon Lea Ballroom was awash with colour and filled with generous supporters who

helped us raise over \$35,000 for the Mercy Hospital for Women Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

We were honoured to hear from Maddie Francis, founder of NICU Cheer, who shared her moving story of her beautiful son

Ashton who was born prematurely at Mercy Hospital for Women, where he then spent six and a half weeks in the NICU before finally going home with Maddie and her husband, Aaron.

A surprise donation from our event sponsor, Loan Ngo, owner of O'Brien's Pharmacy, together with

the support of the event attendees has allowed us to purchase two new cardiocotography (CTG) machines for Mercy Hospital for Women — an incredible achievement that will help to save the lives of many more babies.

Planning has already commenced for the 2024 Mercy Health Foundation Mother's Day High Tea Luncheon and we would be delighted to have you join us again.

For more information, or if you would like to sponsor an event, please contact the team at the details below:

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foundation@mercy.com.au
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Mercy Health
Foundation

Care first

Join us for the

2023 Mercy Health Foundation Golf Day

Tuesday 17 October | Kingston Heath Golf Club

To register your interest please contact the team at Mercy Health Foundation
03 8416 7766 | foundation@mercy.com.au | mercyhealthfoundation.org.au

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What's happening in the community

Run Melbourne 2023 Sunday 16 July

Mercy Health Foundation is one of the chosen charities for this year's Run Melbourne. With closed roads and a fast, flat course, more than 20,000 runners will descend on the streets, heading past some of Melbourne's most famous landmarks. Cheer zones and epic vibes make this a race weekend unlike any other. Join the movement, inspire our city to run and raise money to support Mercy Health.



Scan the
QR to register

Sandy Point Half Marathon Sunday 27 August

Mercy Health Foundation is one of the chosen charities for this year's Sandy Point Half Marathon. Starting at Green Point in Brighton, you will then run along Melbourne's beautiful Bayside, while also raising money to support Mercy Health. You can choose to run for 5km, 10km or 21.1km.



Scan the
QR to register

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